



Foras na Gaeilge

Courtesy Translation

Post-Primary Support Team
Department of Education,
Rathgael House,
Bangor,
BT19 7PR

21-02-06

A chara,

I am writing to you on behalf of Foras Na Gaeilge, the Cross-Border Body set up in December 1999 to promote the Irish language throughout the island of Ireland.

The functions of Foras Na Gaeilge include:

- promotion of the Irish language facilitating and encouraging its use in speech and writing in public and private life in the South and, in the context of Part III of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in Northern Ireland where there is appropriate demand;
- advising both administrations, public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors.

It is under this responsibility that I am writing to you to express our unease and concern in relation to “The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006”.

It appears to us that the Irish language is being neglected and unfairly treated at KS4. In relation to the proposal made for KS3 in the Order:

“Any Official language of the European Community (other than English and, in Irish speaking schools, Irish)”. (Part III, Key Stage 3, page 30)

This leaves room for students wishing to study Irish to do so.

But, the neglect and mistreatment of Irish occurs in relation to Modern Languages at KS4. The Order states:

“at least one shall be a course in an official language of the European Community (other than English and Irish)”. (Part II, Par. 18, Section (d))

This means that no students may study only Irish as a language at KS4 although they can do so at KS3.

We cannot understand this position and find that it is not logical.

- Irish is an official language of the EC.
- Irish can be studied at KS3 but, under this Order, students will not be able to study it at KS4.
- Some 2820 students do the Irish GCSE exam each year. This will not be available to them under this new Order.

If the wording of Order for KS4 was changed to the wording used for KS3, this problem would be solved.

Is mise le meas

Ferdie Mac an Fhailigh
Deputy Chief Executive/
Director of Education Services